



**American Orthotic &  
Prosthetic Association**

## **Outcomes-Based Research/Evidence-Based Practice**

### **Request**

*AOPA urges your support for the Wounded Warrior Research Enhancement Act (Senate bill number pending).*

### **Background**

Traumatic brain injury and amputation have become “signature injuries” in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Congress has responded by providing additional resources for research that can help to restore the maximum possible function to Wounded Warriors and Veterans who require orthotic and prosthetic care.

We would like to work with Congress to ensure that those research funds are being put to work in ways that make a difference in the clinic and in the daily lives of patients. In particular, prosthetics and orthotics research at the VA, NIH, and DoD have been less focused on outcomes than in some other allied health professions. For practitioners, there is perhaps less research than one might want to help determine best practices, the most effective approaches, and which patients benefit most from which technologies and supports.

Our field has important, unanswered questions with significant cost implications for DoD, the VA, Medicare and health care more generally. Significant research questions remain, including: What interventions can prevent amputation? Or subsequent surgeries? At what point in the in the course of patient treatment is orthotic and prosthetic intervention most effective? Which patients benefit most from which technologies? What O&P practices facilitate successful aging, and how does the aging process affect the use of prosthetics, including increased skin breakdown, loss of balance, falls and other issues, such as promoting return to work?

What conclusions could longitudinal data relating to amputees provide as to their treatment? What light could research shed on the possibility that there may be a natural history in recovery and potential complications that would improve quality and cost effectiveness of their care? What should be the timing of orthotic and prosthetic intervention to best prevent loss of activity, mobility and ability to work

*(over please)*

and carry out activities of daily living? Such elements of a coherent orthotics and prosthetics research agenda are vitally important to reducing future health care costs as well as ensuring that patients receive appropriate, necessary care. These and other key questions being asked by the field remain unanswered.

### **Recommendation**

AOPA believes that these and other elements of a coherent O&P research agenda are vitally important to reducing future health care costs as well as ensuring that Wounded Warriors, Veterans, and civilian orthotic and prosthetic patients receive appropriate, necessary care. We look forward to working with Congress to ensure that the resources provided for prosthetic and orthotic research are helping to answer the field's most pressing questions.

Just this week, Sen. Durbin introduced the Wounded Warrior Research Enhancement Act (bill number pending) that will prioritize and coordinate prosthetics and orthotics research at the Department of Defense through development of a comprehensive plan. The bill, which authorizes a modest increase of \$30 million per year for research, will also create the first ever funding for peer-reviewed prosthetics and orthotics outcomes research, to support evidence-based care for service members, Veterans, seniors, and other prosthetic and orthotic patients. Finally, the bill would provide funds for peer-reviewed development of new materials and technologies to improve prosthetic and orthotic care. AOPA urges Senators to join as co-sponsors of this bill, and hopes that members in the House will consider taking the lead in introduction of a companion bill.

**For more information contact the American Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (AOPA) at (571) 431-0876 or [www.AOPAnet.org](http://www.AOPAnet.org).**

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